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SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: TURKEY-IRAQ: WAY FORWARD ON SUSTAINMENT

REF: (A) ANKARA 6952, (B) ANKARA 6870, (C) ADANA 205

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1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Post and EUCOM/DESC are prepared to work with Turkish authorities to explore short/medium term options that could improve predictability and consistency of fuel product flow across the border. These include staging sustainment trucks on the Turkish side of the border before they cross Habur and building a short pipeline to carry sustainment fuel across the border. These measures would not address the longer-term issue of the inadequacy of the existing infrastructure to support greater trade between Iraq and the rest of the world, which Post would support re-engaging on trilaterally, after the formation of a new Iraqi government. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Embassy, Consulate Adana, ODC, EUCOM, and DESC (Defense Energy Support Center) participated in a December 1 Habur Gate inspection and fuels meeting at the Turkey-Iraq border. Representatives of Coalition COSCOM and CENTCOM called for increased predictability and consistency of sustainment tanker flow (averaging 45 per day per current requirement, but subject to volatility due to SOMO ebb and flow and other external factors). Building on Ref A (Habur Gate - Where Do We Go From Here?) recommendations, Post proposes the following actions:

Short-Term - Consider Staging Ideas

3. (SBU) Consulate Adana and ODC will seek to make a January call on the Sirnak Governor for informal inquiry and fact-finding whether there would be scope for the U.S. military to use a Turkish contractor to organize staging of sustainment vehicles (including non-fuel) in the new Silopi parking yard. The unpaved 5000-truck capacity parking yard is now being used as an extension of the waiting queue. (U.S. use of a portion of the facility - with or without improvement - could allow re-prioritization among sustainment trucks, but any perception of preferential treatment for sustainment trucks in crossing the border on an expedited basis would have negative consequences.) Alternatively, the U.S. could consider creating a stand-alone yard facility further west of Silopi, which might offer the opportunity to stage and insert batches of trucks into the queue. (Note: the GOT does not allow convoying of fuel tankers from the Adana CoCo loading facility to the border.)

4. (SBU) DESC will also engage with its contractors (Petrol Ofisi and SHG/Kizil Group) to establish mechanisms for communicating more information on tanker location in an attempt to gain greater predictability and consistency. (DESC had used a contractor in the past to attempt to accomplish similar goals, but with unsatisfactory results.)

Move Away from Reliance on Habur - Use a Pipeline

5. (SBU) As an intermediate step for weaning our reliance from the single Habur Gate, DESC will develop a complete proposal for using a pipeline, thereby avoiding the border crossing to meet its fuel requirements. This could either be an independent facility or in collaboration with the TPIC unloading facility and pipeline, substantially complete on the Turkish side (but awaiting completion of the SOMO partner facility on the Iraqi side). TPIC is a subsidiary of Turkish State Oil Company TPAO. Its facility and short pipeline adjacent to Habur Gate will have a capacity equivalent to about 60 tankers equivalent per day. If DESC decides to seriously pursue this course, Embassies Ankara and Baghdad would have to undertake formal communication with the GOT and GOI, respectively.

Someday a Second Gate

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Mission Turkey understands how important northern GLOC is to the success of our mission in Iraq; support for this mission is our top priority. As a result, we counsel that short term steps identified may not be successful for a variety of reasons. Use of the parking yard at Silopi may not be available to us for practical, economic, or political reasons. Changing status quo with Turkish Customs may be risky and cause unanticipated knock-on problems, which could increase -- rather than decrease -- volatility or uncertainty. Any perception of preferential treatment for sustainment drivers (already paid higher wages than those driving for SOMO) could elicit strikes or violence among the frazzled drivers. We encourage all parties supporting coalition sustainment to do careful cost/benefit analysis for options, to include considering that staging on the Iraq side of Habur Gate (status quo) may be the best option.

17. (SBU) Any new observer to the situation at Habur Gate cannot fail to be struck by the inefficiency and risk of reliance on a single congested border gate for sustainment fuel and growing bilateral trade. From any security, economic, and environmental perspective, lining up thousands of trucks on each side of the border does not make sense. The incremental measures proposed above are not a long-term solution, which in our view requires Iraqi-Turkish-U.S. political engagement to let the economics carry the day for a second border gate (Ref A). Another subject that could be addressed tri-laterally is improving payments and communications between SOMO and its Turkish suppliers (Ref B) to encourage more timely payment of arrears. SOMO arrears are again mounting to the next crisis point where suppliers will again cease delivery.

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